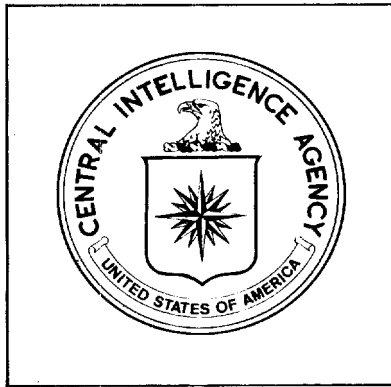


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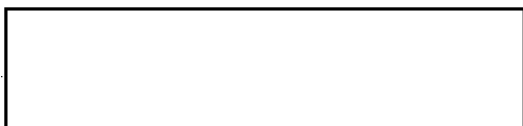
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## STAFF NOTES:

# Soviet Union Eastern Europe

State Dept. review completed

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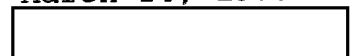


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Sino-Soviet Border Talks Remain Stalled

The Sino-Soviet border negotiations evidently have made no progress since the return of chief Soviet negotiator Ilichev to Peking in mid-February as both sides adhere to their past positions. According to the Soviet counselor in Peking, the major obstacle to progress continues to be the Chinese demand that the USSR remove its forces from those areas designated as disputed by Peking.

Since the border talks began in 1969, Peking has demanded that the USSR remove its forces from areas contiguous to the so-called disputed regions. Peking has insisted that Soviet forces withdraw some distance from several areas, including a large segment in the Pamir Mountains bordering on southwestern Sinkiang and, apparently, at least one small tract of land bordering on northern Manchuria. Although Moscow has offered to turn over more than 400 of the border river islands, Peking has rejected this offer and still considers many river islands to be part of the disputed territories.

Moscow has consistently rejected this precondition to formal negotiations, regarding it as, in Brezhnev's words, "absolutely unacceptable." Moscow evidently sees no prospects for progress in the border talks until this condition is removed, or at least drastically modified. In the meantime, the talks continue, according to the Soviet counselor, on a twice-weekly basis as both sides exchange drafts dealing with minor points of contention.



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Hungarian Party Congress Results

The Hungarian party Congress ended on Saturday with an enthusiastic endorsement of Kadar's continued leadership.

Personnel shifts in the Politburo show the "moderates" losing ground, but the relative political inexperience of the newcomers could mean they will be more responsive to Kadar's lead in the short run. Lajos Feher and Rezso Nyers, the advocates of economic reform who had suffered career setbacks a year ago, were removed from the Politburo. Only one conservative, Gyula Kallai, was ousted.

Gyorgy Aczel, a close adviser to Kadar and a moderate on cultural policies, lost political ground last year, but he was retained on the Politburo. Aczel's protege, Miklos Ovari, the party secretary for cultural affairs, was one of four newcomers to the body. Ovari, who reportedly has a strong interest in Italian and French literature, has been described as a passive man, reluctant to take the initiative.

The other newcomers to the leadership presumably were selected more because of their involvement in key policy areas than because of their political leanings. Gyorgy Lazar is chief of the planning office and deputy premier in charge of Hungary's CEMA account; Lajos Marothy heads the Communist youth organization; and Istvan Sarlos is leader of the People's Front. The selection of Marothy, who is in his early 30s, underscores Budapest's concern with its youth problem. Lazar reportedly is a talented economist, highly regarded by departed Politburo member Nyers, and not inclined toward politics.

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One apparent loser in the changes is party secretary Arpad Pullai, who is responsible for party and mass organizations and has been active in foreign affairs. He gave up the foreign affairs account to new party secretary, Andras Gyenes, and now that the heads of two mass organizations are on the Politburo, his other responsibilities are also circumscribed.

Speeches during the Congress reiterated Budapest's moderate policies, but left little doubt that the regime is still committed to improving central economic controls and to increasing attention to ideology in the media and culture. The personnel changes suggest that orthodoxy will be especially strong in the economic sphere.

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Soviet Cultural Policy Still Ambivalent

The unsettled atmosphere in cultural affairs noted by Western observers since the turn of the year is persisting, with no sign that a resolution is near (*Staff Notes*, March 14).

A Soviet artist, who is a member of the establishment with close ties to the unofficial art community, has told the US embassy that an unnamed official of the CPSU Central Committee Culture Department recently approached the unconventional artists "on a personal basis" with a plea that the group mitigate its demands and keep a low profile. The official reportedly said that candidate Politburo member and culture minister Demichev has plans for "gradual liberalization" of culture, that Demichev has met with strong opposition from doctrinaire elements in the party leadership and in the artistic unions, and that the unofficial artists should, therefore, "go slow" lest their activity prove counterproductive.

According to the source, the artists feel that the Soviet could be using a ploy to make them give up plans for a comprehensive exhibit of their works--now reportedly postponed until April--but that there was a "fifty-fifty" chance that the plea was genuine. They think that while Demichev is slightly more "liberally" inclined than his predecessor in the culture ministry, the prospects for his "gradual liberalization" plan--if, indeed, it exists--are poor. The artists are split on whether to be conciliatory or adamant, but the majority apparently believes that they must persevere in their demands for recognition, in their use of the Western press to publicize their cause, and in their probing of the regime's intentions (*Staff Notes*, March 20).

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In the most recent example of bold initiatives to test the cultural waters, Leningrad's unconventional artists have petitioned the authorities to form an officially recognized "society" of avant-garde painters. By staying within Soviet legal boundaries, the organization could become a vehicle which the regime could use to channel the activities of both the unofficial artists and those members of the official artists unions whose unconventional works cannot now be officially exhibited.

These developments will probably encourage further division within the artists' ranks on what tactics to pursue, and add to speculation about the future course of cultural policy. There have been abundant signs of a pragmatic loosening in cultural affairs since Demichev's assumption of the culture ministry, but it is premature to view them as evidence of any plans for "gradual liberalization." The official public line on cultural conformity has been harder than ever, perhaps reflecting the party's perception of an unsettled situation that stems in part from the leadership's failure to fill the vacuum left by Demichev's removal as party secretary for propaganda, culture, and party indoctrination.

The apparent flux and indecision in cultural, and possibly wider ideological, policy does not necessarily point to a struggle in the leadership over "liberalization." It is possible, however, that there are differences of approach and emphasis. Demichev may see some advantages to taking a more enlightened, albeit institutional, approach to the issue of cultural nonconformism, while other leaders may wish to stand pat so as to avoid showing any signs of public compromise with the West on the ideological front.

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Soviet-Gambian Relations

Gambian President Jawara has just concluded a long-planned but twice-postponed visit to the Soviet Union. He received high-level treatment, including meetings with Prime Minister Kosygin, President Podgorny, First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Mazurov, and Minister of Fisheries Ishkov.

A fishing agreement between the Soviet Union and the Gambian government was signed on March 18.

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The delegation's chance of succeeding may have improved with the conclusion of the fishing accord.

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